THE RECOVERY KERNEL NAVIGATION SERIES

Amends to Others

A How-To Guide, Built to Run Alongside Steps 8 and 9

A companion to all 27 substance and behavior guides in this series, to Amends to Self (Supp. Ch. 43), and to The Commandeering Map and Financial Recovery: The Liquidity Trap, whose guilt and moral-injury material this guide gives a practical process to. This document is an original framework built for this project. It is written to be fully compatible with AA, NA, and other 12-step programs' own Eighth and Ninth Steps, not a replacement for them.

> **HARM REDUCTION RESOURCE — NOT LEGAL OR THERAPEUTIC ADVICE.** Some of what this document describes carries real legal or safety risk, for you or for someone else. Section 4 names when direct amends should not be attempted at all. A sponsor, a therapist, and in some cases a lawyer belong in this process before a conversation happens, not after.

1. What amends actually is

Amends is action, not apology. An apology is words about the past. Amends is a change, verified by the person harmed rather than only claimed by the person who caused it, that actually repairs something or prevents its repetition. Financial Recovery: The Liquidity Trap already makes this distinction for money specifically: a private promise to pay something back, kept only in one's own head, functions like an entry on a ledger no one else can see, and it never actually gets marked closed, because the person who would need to record it as settled does not know it exists. Amends to Others is the general form of that same principle, extended past money to every kind of harm this series describes.

This guide follows the same two traditions this series has pointed back to throughout: the Eighth Step (making a list of all persons harmed, and becoming willing to make amends to them all) and the Ninth Step (making direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others). Nothing here is meant to replace that structure. It is meant to give it a practical process, informed by the biology and the specific harms this series has spent 27 guides describing in detail.

2. The list (Step 8)

Write every name down before deciding what to do about any of them. Sorting comes after the list is complete, not during it, because deciding a name does not belong on the list is itself often the guilt-avoidance this document exists to work against.

- **Direct financial harm.** Money taken, borrowed and never repaid, or spent that should have gone to someone else, covered in detail in Financial Recovery: The Liquidity Trap's taxonomy of borrowing and its liquidity-beyond-borrowing section.
- **Relational harm.** Broken promises, absence, dishonesty, a relationship damaged or ended by the pattern.

- **Someone who was blamed for something you did.** The Liquidity Trap document names this specifically as carrying a distinct weight, moral injury, heavier than guilt over an act that harmed no one else.
- **Harm to a child,** which Section 4 below treats with its own, more careful standard.
- **Harm caused indirectly,** through a behavioral pattern (Section 5 of the behavioral addictions guide), through absence during a family member's own crisis, or through the financial echo described in The Liquidity Trap, debt or damage that outlasted the substance use itself.
- **Yourself,** which belongs on this list too, and is the specific subject Amends to Self (Supp. Ch. 43) addresses in full; this guide focuses on everyone else on the list.

Becoming willing is its own, separate step from making the list, and it is allowed to take real time. Willingness is not the same as readiness to act yet, covered in Section 3.

3. Timing: why willingness and readiness are not the same thing

A specific mistake is worth naming directly, because this series argues against it everywhere else and amends work is no exception: reaching for amends too early, before real stability exists, to relieve one's own guilt rather than to actually benefit the person harmed. The Liquidity Trap document's language for this is precise and applies here without modification: a private wish that no one was really hurt, acted on quickly to settle the question, is not the same as a considered act of repair.

If you are at this stage (Milestone Document, Section 6)	What amends work generally looks like here
Primary focus / early recovery	Willingness can and should form now. Direct action usually should not yet, unless a specific harm is urgent (an unpaid debt with legal consequences building, a child's immediate safety)
Active	Lower-stakes, lower-risk amends can often begin here: a returned item, a debt negotiation started, an honest conversation with someone whose safety is not in question
Maintenance	The harder, higher-stakes amends, a strained family relationship, a significant financial harm, generally belong here, once real, demonstrated stability exists to point to
Standing safeguard	Some amends are never a single event; Section 6 describes living amends, sustained changed behavior as its own, ongoing form of repair

This is a general pattern, not a rule applied identically to every harm. A sponsor or therapist is the right person to help judge a specific case against it.

4. When direct amends should not be attempted

The Ninth Step's own caveat, except when to do so would injure them or others, is not a technicality. It is the single most important sentence in this entire guide.

- **Any situation involving domestic violence, a restraining order, or ongoing safety risk to the other person.** Direct contact can be dangerous or illegal regardless of intent, and a therapist or lawyer, not this document, is the right first conversation.
- **Harm to a child,** where a well-intentioned direct amends attempt can genuinely confuse or burden a child rather than help them; this belongs with a family therapist, and sometimes the correct amends is entirely indirect (Section 6), demonstrated through years of reliable presence rather than a conversation.
- **Reopening someone else's trauma primarily to relieve your own guilt,** which is the exact private-ledger mistake Section 3 describes, now aimed at another person instead of kept silent.
- **Situations with real, ongoing legal exposure,** where a direct admission could create criminal liability for you or implicate someone else; a lawyer decides whether and how this happens, not this guide.
- **The person is deceased, unreachable, or has explicitly asked for no contact.** Section 6's living amends and indirect amends are built for exactly this situation.

5. Having the conversation, when it is appropriate

- **Lead with the specific harm, not a general apology.** "I took money from you without asking" lands differently, and more honestly, than "I'm sorry for everything."
- **State what you are offering, concretely,** repayment, a specific changed behavior, simply an honest accounting of what happened, rather than asking the other person to define what would satisfy you.
- **Let the other person's response be theirs to own.** Anger, distance, or a flat no are all legitimate responses to a real amends attempt, and the attempt is not void because the reception was not what was hoped for.
- **Do not ask for forgiveness as part of the amends itself.** Financial Recovery: The Liquidity Trap makes this distinction for money and it holds everywhere: the amends is the repair, offered freely. Forgiveness, if it comes, is the other person's to give, not something the amends is owed in return for.

6. When direct amends is not possible: living and indirect amends

Section 4 names real situations where direct contact should not happen at all. This does not mean amends becomes impossible. It means the form changes.

- **Living amends.** Sustained, demonstrated changed behavior over real time, verified by more than a single conversation, is itself a form of amends, and often the most convincing one available. This is the same principle the Milestone Document applies to a milestone generally: substantiated by evidence over time, not claimed in a single moment.

- **Amends through a third party,** a trust fund for a child, a donation to an organization connected to the harm caused, a letter held by a therapist rather than delivered directly, when the harmed person cannot or should not be contacted.
- **Amends to the pattern itself,** mentoring someone earlier in a recovery you once needed yourself, which several guides in this series name under Manning, the Trinity's third stage, as real, valuable work in its own right.

7. How this connects to the rest of this series

Document	How it connects
Amends to Self (Supp. Ch. 43)	The internal track. This guide is its companion for the external, relational track; both are usually needed, and neither substitutes for the other.
Financial Recovery: The Liquidity Trap	Its guilt, moral injury, and self-pay ledger material is the psychological foundation this guide builds a process on top of.
The Milestone Document	Amends work is a legitimate entry for the identity and Manning track, and a real, substantiated amend, not a private intention, is exactly the kind of evidence that track asks for.
Navigation for Sponsors	A sponsor's role here is witness, the same role described throughout that guide: present, honest, and not the one deciding for you whether or how an amends should happen.
The Commandeering Map	Its baffoonery section applies directly if a sponsor or peer responds to an amends attempt, successful or not, with mockery rather than honest support.